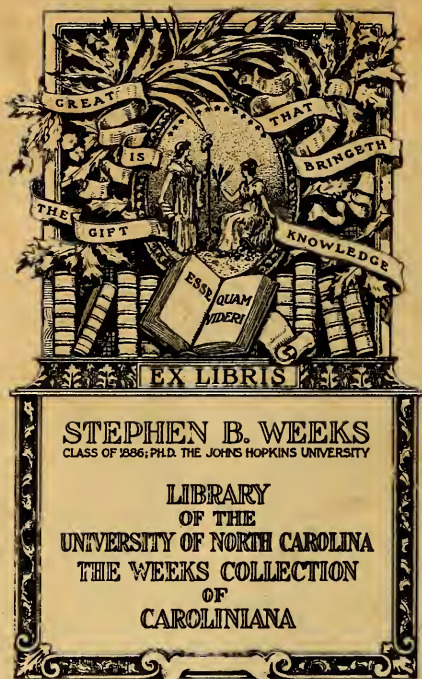


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The relations between those
called the Beebe and the Clark
Old-school Baptists



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THE RELATIONS BETWEEN

THOSE CALLED

The Beebe and the Clark Old-School Baptists

FROM THE "GOSPEL MESSENGER"

FOR NOVEMBER, 1897.

MY RECENT VISIT TO THE KETOCKTON AND EBENEZER ASSOCIATIONS IN VIRGINIA—THE RELATIONS BETWEEN THOSE CALLED THE CLARK AND THE BEEBE BAPTISTS.

Last August I paid a third visit to the sound and excellent Baptists of the above Associations—the Kettocton's 131st and the Ebenezer's 69th Annual Session. The Kehukee Association, which is only one year older than the Kettocton, corresponded by Minutes with the Kettocton as early as 1798, and, after many years' intermission, resumed that correspondence in 1895, and at the same time opened correspondence with the Ebenezer, after both of these Associations had adopted resolutions of brotherly regard for the North-Eastern Associations, with which they had suspended correspondence in 1852 and 1853, and with some of which the Kehukee had corresponded since 1853. My father, Elder C. B. Hassell, in his part of the Church History, put down the Kettocton and Ebenezer among the sound and orderly Primitive Baptist Associations in Virginia (page 925); the soundness and orderliness of the old Kettocton, from its start, may be seen in four of the most interesting pages in the Church History (916-920).

Elder M. T. Lawrence, of Hamilton, N. C., and Elder A. J. Moore, of Whitakers, N. C., and I left our homes August 12th to visit the Kettocton and Ebenezer Associations, and returned on the 24th of August. We were cordially received by the members of these two Associations, and were rejoiced to find them contending earnestly for the faith once for all delivered to the saints—the faith maintained for 132 years by the churches of the Kehukee Association and by all sound and orderly Primitive Baptists everywhere. In contending for this sound and ancient faith they have, especially in their firm encounters, during the last seven years, with the pretentious and plausible New School theory (of means in regeneration) revamped by Elder E. H. Burnham, passed through hotter fires of persecution, for the truth's sake, than any other Primitive Baptists, not similarly situated, in America; and their uncompromising faithfulness in this sore conflict ought to be joyfully recognized by all their brethren in this country.

Elder John Clark, of Front Royal, Va., in his "Exposure of Heresies" published in 1873, says (in Chapter Fourth, pages 24-32) that at the session of the Ketockton Association, held with Water Lick Church in 1850, Elder R. C. Leachman, of the Corresponding Meeting of Virginia, declared from the stand that Christ would not come again to this earth; that He came once, and then had something to do, but having finished that work, He would not come again. The Ketockton Association, held with Zion Church in 1852, condemned as heretical this denial of the second coming of Christ to the world, and also the affirmations that "the life-giving Spirit of God is a created existence"; that "the Son of God, as the Head of the Church, is a creature"; and that "when Christ died and lay in the grave three days and three nights, there was not a living saint in heaven or upon earth." Elder Clark says that, at this session in 1852, three preachers, Elders Trott, Leachman, and Klipstine (of the Corresponding Meeting of Virginia) and four churches withdrew from the Ketockton Association on account of the above declaration, asserting that they were cut off thereby, and that they called a meeting at Ebenezer Meeting House, and affirmed that they did not hold the doctrines condemned by the Ketockton Association, and yet passed resolutions of non-fellowship for that Association! At its session in 1853, the Ketockton Association (understanding that the Warwick Association, of New York, in its Circular Letter of 1852, affirmed that Christ, as Mediator, was neither God nor man, and dropped from its Minutes the Hardiston Church for condemning such a sentiment), *discontinued* correspondence with the Warwick Association, and *suspended* correspondence with the Baltimore, Delaware, Delaware River, Chemung, and Lexington Associations, not charging the last five Associations with holding the sentiments and approving the conduct of the Warwick Association and of the four non-fellowshipping churches mentioned above, but suspending such correspondence because the Ketockton Association could not consistently hold fellowship and correspondence with those who held in their fellowship and correspondence the Warwick Association and the Pastors (Elders Trott, Leachman, and Klipstine) of the churches referred to, who were believed to have been the instruments

of their withdrawal and declaration of non-fellowship for the Ketockton Association. The Ebenezer Association, at its session in 1853, discontinued correspondence with the Corresponding Meeting of Virginia, the Baltimore, Warwick, Delaware, and Delaware River Associations, not for believing, but for tolerating and fellowshiping those who declared, that "the Eternal life died on Calvary,—was a created or produced existence,—that the Son of God is a creature,—that there is no change wrought in the soul in regeneration,—that the life-giving Spirit of God is a created existence, and many other kindred heresies recently preached and published by professed Old School Baptists." The members of the Corresponding Meeting of Virginia, and of the Warwick, Baltimore, Delaware, and Delaware River Associations said, and still say, that the Ketockton and Ebenezer Associations misunderstood and misrepresented their sentiments on the above subjects; that a very few of their ministers may, at times, have said or written some such things, but that such sentiments were not and are not endorsed or accepted by those Associations or their churches. From my own acquaintance, for thirty years, with the ministers of the North-Eastern Associations and with their writings, I can say that the most of the sentiments above mentioned and condemned were advocated (apparently, obscurely, and confusedly) by only one, two, or three of those ministers, all of whom have long since died, and that the most of those sentiments are not held now by any living person in the Old School Baptist ranks; and that only one of those sentiments, and that in a modified form, is now held by our North-Eastern ministers, and this is that, not in the *nature*, but only in the *condition*, of the soul is there a change wrought in regeneration. They admit that there is a wonderful change in the human being who is born again, and that the Holy Spirit is the sole author of this change, and that the change consists in the impartation of a new and heavenly and holy life or nature or principle to the quickened sinner, which principle will continually war with the old evil fleshly principle, until the latter is subdued and forever done away with at death and in the resurrection. Our brethren of the Ketockton and Ebenezer Associations prefer to say that the soul is quickened and made holy in regeneration, as the body will be in the resur-

rection, at the same time admitting that the flesh or sin remains in the body until death. It seems more scriptural and correct to me to say, that regeneration takes place in the soul or spirit, and that sin also remains in the soul or spirit till death. But in all these three different methods of expression, the substantial, fundamental meaning seems to me to be precisely the same, so that either one of these expressions is perfectly allowable to those who may prefer it, without any weakening of the bonds of love and fellowship.

In August, 1895, the Ketockton and Ebenezer Associations unanimously adopted the following resolution :

“WHEREAS, The Lord Jesus Christ prays that His people should be one, as He and the Father are one, and,

WHEREAS, Discordant and extreme elements (those advocating eternal-vital-unionism and those advocating meansism) have been separated from our North-Eastern brethren and ourselves; and,

WHEREAS, We have reason to believe that the great body of those brethren are agreed with us in regard to salvation by grace alone, and the divinity and second coming of Christ, and the change in the soul in regeneration, and the resurrection of the body, and the eternal judgment of God, consigning the wicked to everlasting punishment, and welcoming the righteous to everlasting happiness, and all other cardinal points of the Old School or Primitive Baptist faith; therefore,

Resolved, That we take pleasure in declaring our hearty gospel fellowship for our North-Eastern brethren and all other Old School or Primitive Baptists who agree with us in regard to these fundamental points of doctrine, and we hereby cordially invite these brethren to visit us and to behold our faith and order in the gospel, and their ministers to attend our meetings and preach for us.”

By “eternal vital-unionism” above is meant, the doctrine of the eternal—vital—union of Christ and His people, in the sense that they are as eternal and uncreated as He, and had an actual existence as eternal children, eternal spirits, before the beginning of the world; this doctrine was apparently maintained thirty years ago, both by tongue and pen, by some brethren in the fellowship of the North-Eastern Associations, but not one person in their fellowship

now maintains such a doctrine; they all say that Christ as God is the only eternal, uncreated Being, and that He gives His eternal life to all His elect, and is Himself their Head and Life.

In August, 1896, the Ebenezer Association unanimously adopted the following resolution:

"WHEREAS, We, the Ebenezer Association, have been estranged from our brethren of the Eastern Associations, and it seems to us desirable, and for the good of Zion and the glory of God, that this estrangement should cease, we feel willing to do our part towards a restoration of our former brotherly relations; therefore,

"Resolved, That whatever causes of difference may have once existed, we believe that we are now one with our brethren of the Eastern Associations, and with the brethren generally in their correspondence; we, therefore, desire and ask for a renewal of our former relations with them.

"Resolved, That we send each of these Associations a copy of these resolutions and ask them to receive and consider them in the same spirit of brotherly love that actuates us, as we hope, in sending them.

"Resolved, That we solicit a reply from these Associations, and ask as many as can to come to meet and mingle with us, either in visiting our churches or Associations to see whether or not we are really one in faith and practice."

And in August, 1897, the Ketockton Association unanimously adopted this resolution:

"WHEREAS, The union and fellowship of God's children are greatly to be desired, not only for our comfort and enlargement in the gospel, but also that we may properly witness to the world our faith in Jesus: Therefore we affectionately invite all ministers of the Primitive Baptist faith, including those of the North-Eastern Associations, to visit and to preach among us, with a view, if we are found to be agreed, to brotherly relations between us."

I have before me the replies of the Virginia Corresponding Meeting, and the Baltimore, Delaware, Delaware River, and Warwick Associations to the above resolution of the Ebenezer Association. The four last Associations (the Baltimore, Delaware, Delaware River, and Warwick) consider that the expression of a desire on the part of the Ebenezer Association for a renewal of brotherly relations is a

virtual withdrawal of all former acts of non-fellowship, and they cordially respond to the invitation of the Ebenezer Association to meet with them, as opportunity in Providence may occur, for kindly and candid exchange of views, trusting that it may be found that they are really one in heart and mind, in experience, and in the faith of the gospel. The Delaware River and Warwick Associations say that they are not aware that they have in any wise departed from the faith of their fathers, as held and declared by them when they withdrew from those who were carried away by the false doctrine and practice of Andrew Fuller, and that upon those principles they understand that the Ebenezer Association formerly stood, and they are glad to hope and believe that they still stand; and they very properly add: "If individuals among them have said things contrary to those principles of doctrine, we would not therefore accuse them as a body of unsoundness, and we think that we have a right to ask of them the same kindly judgment."

The Virginia Corresponding Meeting reply to the resolution of the Ebenezer Association as follows: "We have at no time declared non-fellowship for them, nor have we made any point of doctrine held by them, and not by us, a test of fellowship; but as they have so declared against us for doctrine we hold, and for some we do not and never did hold, it is but reasonable that they should rescind all resolutions of non-fellowship on their books against us, and cease charging us with heresies, and making a test of fellowship of certain points of doctrine against us which our correspondents do not do, and strife will be at an end, and peace and fellowship will follow."

In answer to this declaration of the Virginia Corresponding Meeting it may be said, in regard to the latter suggestions, that it does indeed seem reasonable that charges of heresy and tests of fellowship unknown among other Primitive Baptists, should be abandoned between Associations and churches seeking brotherly relations with each other; but, in regard to the former suggestion, that all resolutions of non-fellowship on their books should be rescinded, it may be said that, as I have shown in this article, the *first personal* resolutions of non-fellowship, on these matters of difference, were passed by four churches of the Virginia

Corresponding Meeting, which ought, therefore, to be rescinded *first*, if other similar resolutions must be rescinded; and, though the Ketockton and Ebenezer Associations discontinued or suspended correspondence with the North-Eastern Associations, they did not declare non-fellowship for them, but only for certain *doctrines* which they allowed to be preached among them, and, if they should rescind these resolutions, they would seem to declare fellowship for what they still consider erroneous teachings or statements; and, finally (and this, it seems, ought to settle the matter), the Baltimore, Delaware, Delaware River, and Warwick Associations regard the recent resolution of the Ebenezer Association as a virtual withdrawal of the application of the former non-fellowship resolutions to themselves, and they cordially reciprocate the desire of the Ebenezer Association for mutual visitation with a view to the restoration of brotherly relations. The resolutions passed in 1895 and 1897 by the Ketockton Association requested similar friendly visits from the brethren and ministers of the North-Eastern Associations.

I am sure that I express the sentiments of the Kehukee Association and of Primitive Baptists in general throughout the United States, when I say, that we earnestly hope that these long-separated brethren will visit each other in humility and love, and find that they are agreed in the fundamental points of doctrine, and will hereafter dwell together in peace and fellowship. Thus will the body of Christ be edified, and God will be glorified.

SYLVESTER HASSELL.

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